

In I Corinthians 10:13, having enumerated the many enticements into which the Israelites in the wilderness fell, and having urged the believers at Corinth to be careful lest they also fall, Paul gives them God's own assurance that "No enticement to evil has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be enticed to evil beyond what you can bear. But when you are enticed to evil, He will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it." And in II Peter 2:7-9, Peter compares the way He rescued righteous Lot from the enticements to evil all around him in Sodom, and the way He rescues godly persons from enticements to evil in the present time.

There are a few instances in which both meanings (test and entice to moral evil) appear in the same context. It may be said that in these cases enticements to evil test character.

In the classic case of Job we find Satan enticing Job to moral evil, and God testing the character of His righteous servant. Thus Satan tempts while God tests! God is sure that Job will prove that he is righteous by getting the victory over Satan's enticements and schemes. And Job assays out to be genuine gold!

In verse 12 of the classic passage on temptation (James 1:12-15), James says that the man who perseveres under trial is blessed, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him. This can be related to verses 2-4 of the same chapter, in which James urges his readers to count it pure joy whenever they face trials of many kinds, because they know that the testing of their faith develops perseverance, which in turn leads toward maturity and completeness.

But in verses 13 and 14 of chapter 1, James is speaking of enticement to moral evil. He writes: "When tempted, no one should say, 'God is tempting me.' For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full grown, gives birth to death."

Thus testing of character is not the same as enticement to moral evil. God tests character, but does not entice to moral evil. Satan and his angels entice to moral evil! God may test the character of His saints by allowing Satan to entice them to moral evil, but God never entices to moral evil and always provides a way out so that His beloved ones may be able to stand up under such enticement. Testing of character reveals the quality of the thing or person scrutinized. Enticement to moral evil, when yielded to with evil desire, leads to sin and death.

(b) Toward an understanding of Christ's temptations

[1] Scriptures relevant to Christ's temptations

Luke 4:1-13 (parallel: Matthew 4:1-11) -- "And Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led about by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil. And He ate nothing during those days; and when they had ended, He became hungry. And the devil said to Him, 'If you are the Son of God, tell this stone to become